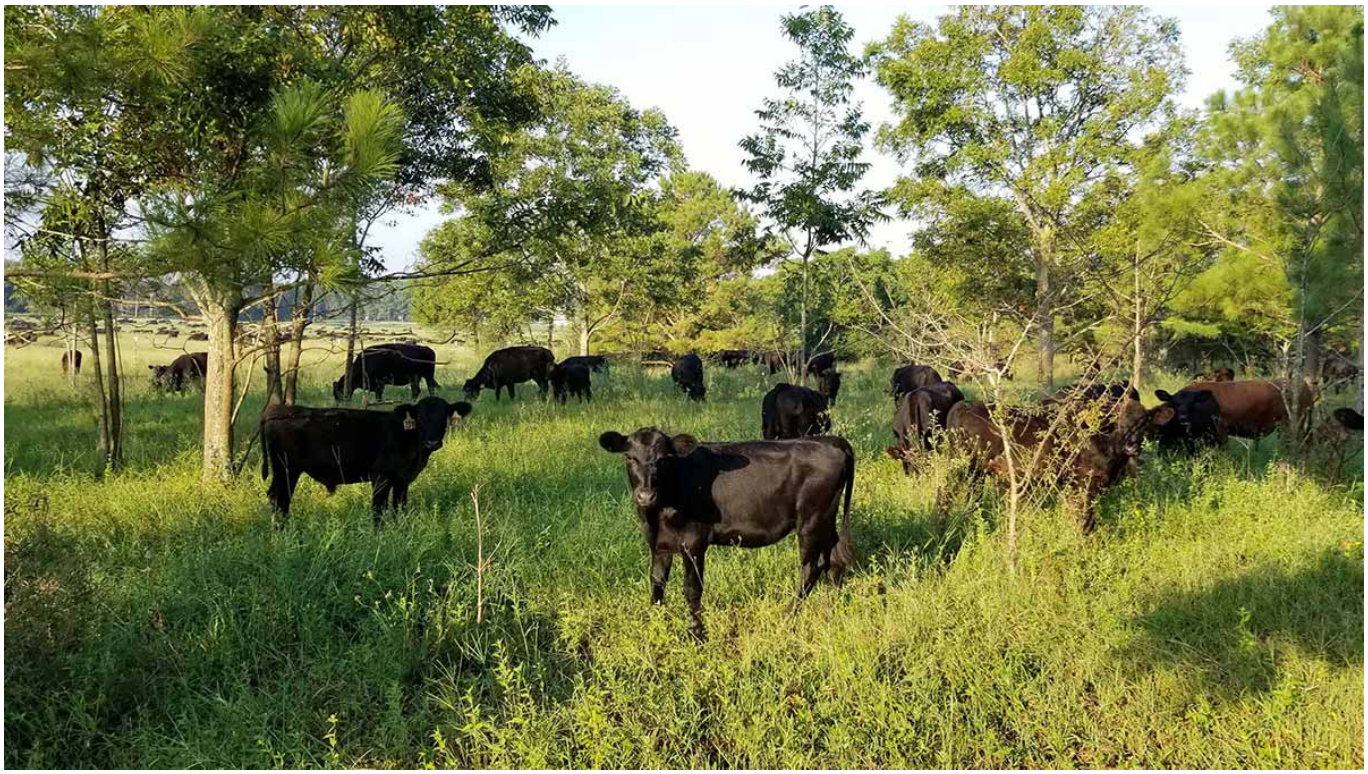
Will's Wisdom: Greenwashing Is Destroying The Regenerative Farming Movement

POSTED BY WILL HARRIS

DEC 9, 2019 8:37:00 AM



Twenty five years ago, I began slowly transitioning our family farm from the industrial cattle farm that it had become. Today we pasture-raise cattle, sheep, hogs, poultry, goats, rabbits, honey, eggs, organic vegetables, and a lot of the other products that the Abundance of Nature provides when her cycles are functioning properly.

Our farm had always been profitable when I operated it industrially. We had a few lean 'start up'

years during the transition, but we soon began getting a fair return for our work.

Within the last 5 years, profitability has become elusive. The farm has continued to be profitable, but we are certainly not getting the sort of returns that a business owner has the right to expect. Our expenses are under control, we have good equity, we operate efficiently, and we have great employees… but we make a very small profit for the amount of business that we do.

I am not whining. We love what we do, and we are secure in our financial position. But, I am sad that I am no longer able to promote the financial viability of regenerative, compassionate, and fair farming to other farmers. Now, I believe, the risk of transitioning is too great.

Why was I able to successfully transition, but now warn others to be careful? **Because the game has changed.**

Product Greenwashing Is Destroying The Regenerative, Humane, and Rural Community Building Farm Movement.

Large multinational companies have seen the marketing advantage of making untrue claims on their products. Because of weak USDA labeling rules, these companies can charge more for their commodity products without producing them in a better way. They can add to their price, without changing their production practices.

Consider this:

- International meat companies can shop for the cheapest grassfed beef in the world, usually found in impoverished countries.
- The cattle, hogs, poultry can be born, raised, and slaughtered in these foreign countries, and the meat be shipped on containers to the United States.
- Then, it can be sold in your local grocery store with USDA label that proudly proclaims "Product of the USA".

This is perfectly legal. It is hard to fathom, but it is undisputedly true.

This legal, but corrupt, practice will halt the transition of farms that would like to follow the path toward regenerative, compassionate, and fair farming. See below-

Add your voice to those of us who are trying to end this trickery by supporting the US Beef Integrity Act.

Support the

US Beef Integrity Act

More information from the **Organic Consumers Association**:

The USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Services Agency allows the use of the "Product of U.S.A." label on any beef as long as the meat passed through a U.S.-based inspection plant, and/or was blended with meat from animals that were born and raised in the U.S.

Sales of grass-fed meat are nearly doubling annually. But about 80 percent of the grass-fed beef market is supplied by imports, compared with the total beef market where imports make up only 9 percent.

Because those imports often carry a "Product of U.S.A." label just because they passed through a U.S. processing plant, U.S. grass-fed and grass-finished beef producers are hit hardest by this policy.U.S. producers can't differentiate their product in the grocery store from imported beef.

The U.S. Beef Integrity Act aims to give consumers what they want—honest labels. It would also level the playing field for U.S. grass-fed and grass-finished beef producers, whose practices are better for consumer health, and better for the environment.

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Carolee Bol

12/9/2019, 3:30:59 PM

Please do all that you can to support US regenerative farms. Do not greenwash by labeling in a dishonest way even if it is legal and you know what is dishonest. Finally time to stop these silly games and loopholes. Play fair or don't play at all.

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Mary Quinones

12/9/2019, 3:42:02 PM

I am for your cause. Keep spreading the knowledge. I wasn't aware of the greenwashing label scam.

ANNA SOEIRO

12/9/2019, 3:53:17 PM

Integrity is what is done when no one is looking! Do your part please.

Tony Ridealgh

12/9/2019, 3:54:23 PM

Misleading product labelling must be banned.
The consumer should be able to know where their intended purchase has come from.

Melissa Gillette

12/9/2019, 4:22:33 PM

I had no idea this was happening so thank you for sharing this information. Now I can pass it on....

Jeannine Addams

12/9/2019, 4:49:49 PM

Thank you, Will, for bringing this to light. I had not idea, and it's infuriating. I just signed the petition, adding my own thoughts at the top of the message. And will pass along the

information to my friends.

Neil Lowe

12/9/2019, 4:54:05 PM

I did not know about this I am sharing blog on FB niw

Jerald W. Burriss

12/9/2019, 5:40:43 PM

No surprise - "organic" has been manipulated/dumbed down for Bid Ag for many years.
All kinds of language in markets about meat, eggs and organics that is misleading.
Shame on our govt that is not pushing the USFA/FDA to do their job of protecting American consumers.
Thank you for your efforts!

Kim Acker

12/9/2019, 6:19:44 PM

I've reached out to my congress person and very much appreciate your giving us guidance on how to act to support the work of ranchers like you. What else can we do?

Jenni Harris

12/10/2019, 1:40:41 PM

Thank you, Kim. The next step is voting with your dollars for systems that you support.

Liam Rooney

12/10/2019, 12:27:15 AM

The American public needs to appreciate the destructive power of big ag. It's time for our lawmakers to stand up for family farms and ranches.

ALLYN HOUSE

12/10/2019, 3:16:14 AM

Thanks Will for spreading this information~~VERY IMPORTANT !!

D Diederich

12/10/2019, 7:27:20 AM

Will I thank you for the information and it is not just meat. In the last couple of years the entire produce department has been relabeled "Product of USA" instead of "Produce Grown in USA" and all the producer has to do is re-package the produce after it is shipped to the USA. Do people know or care where their broccoli comes from?

Cecile Canu

12/13/2019, 1:10:43 PM

Labeling properly has been an issue not only on meat but also for GMO . Thank you for the wonderful product you have for us

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Stu Slutzky

12/14/2019, 10:26:03 AM

It's a shame that the honest hard working (I know you work extremely hard) producers that have INTEGRITY are taking the brunt of these misleading labeling systems that are in place. I only ask that you continue the fight in establishing integrity standards and

continue to speed the word. Perhaps a documentary may support and garner more followers.

But know this, you and your families work has NOT GONE UNNOTICED.

I stand beside you Will...

Stu~

Deann Riddle

12/14/2019, 5:21:59 PM

I wish we could eat all the food grown here in this country, instead of having to eat food grown elsewhere!

Chris Ketchum

12/14/2019, 10:08:29 PM

Country of Origin labeling is extremely important, which is why I partner with organizations, like R-Calf, who work to get COOL laws changed. Why would politicians want to stab America its heart by knowingly harming the American farmer?

John Richardson

12/15/2019, 7:14:59 AM

Multinational corporations seek profit for stock holders above all else. Integrity, truth in advertising, and well-being of consumer is ignored.

Travis Krause

12/15/2019, 9:36:22 AM

Will, I meet you several years ago in St Louis, Missouri at the SARE/NCAT once a decade conference. We had breakfast together and talked about this very subject. I pointedly

asked you about financials and profitability of your operation. We had a great discussion about it. Sadly, we are in the same boat on our ranch, Parker Creek Ranch. We are in South Texas with several hundred head of grass-fed cattle and other species all on pasture. There sadly isn't much room for growth and our profit margins aren't much more than 2% this year. We have not been able to build as much equity as we would like and our debt/income ratio is under control. I have some serious doubts about the financial viability of it as well. For most folks it will remain a "homestead" movement and I don't see it reaching the depths of larger operations. Thanks for taking the time to write your blog.
,Travis Krause
-Parker Creek Ranch
D'Hanis, Texas

Chris Meinig

12/15/2019, 12:36:40 PM

Will: Thanks for spreading the word on this. Care of the land and the land-caretakers/ stewards across our country is so important and something that can bring us together. Please consider writing an article on your new project with agrisolar in Early county and if that business model can help more farmers, provide rural income, sequester an immense amount of carbon and heal depleted land. Thanks for your work!

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nancy pauken

12/28/2019, 2:11:12 PM

We deserve complete and total transparency, no excuses! Though White Oak isn't in my community, I still support you because you are part of a small, local community that the WalMarts of the world have destroyed. Thank you, your family and your team, Mr Harris for hanging in there! Not only is it devastating for those who truly practice regenerative farming, but also for those of us who are against Big Ag, Big Pharma and Big Med.

Michael Dangan

11/8/2021, 1:30:53 AM

Great Article! Thank you for sharing this very informative post, and looking forward to the latest one.

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